

Cornelio Fabro on Supernatural Participations

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Cornelio Fabro, CSS (1911–1995) devoted his two major works in Thomistic metaphysics to the notion of participation.¹ His interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's texts led him to oppose strongly Louis-Bertrand Geiger's twofold division of participation² as well as the Scholastic reduction of the act of being (*actus essendi*) to factual existence. For his part, Fabro proposed a division between predicamental participation and transcendental participation and understood *actus essendi* as the intensive, actuating, and emergent act of a being (*ens*).

The importance of understanding correctly the notions of participation and being (*esse*) is immediately apparent with regard to Aquinas's theology of grace. On the one hand, the gift of grace is described by Aquinas as a "certain *participation* of divine nature,"³ and, on the other, grace is presented by Aquinas as an accidental form that mediates spiritual being (*esse spirituale*) or the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) to rational creatures.⁴ Misunderstandings concerning the notion of participation or being (*esse*) will inevitably hinder the correct interpretation of Aquinas's thought and texts on grace.⁵

In this paper, I want to look specifically at Cornelio Fabro's approach to participation and how it can aid the interpretation of Aquinas's theology of grace. The Scholastic interpretation of Aquinas tended to divide "physical participation" into "virtual participation" and "formal participation," with most authors holding that grace is a formal participation.

For example, according to Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, grace is an analogical, formal participation in Deity as it is in itself, i.e., the divine nature as divine. He holds that there is an imperfect imitation between what is substantially in God and accidentally in justified rational creatures.⁶ Fabro, on the other hand, divides participation into predicamental participation and transcendental participation and even posits a third kind of participation for that of grace, called *attingere per operationem*—meaning “to touch” or “to attain” by way of operation. Predicamental participation concerns univocal participations marked by a certain equality (*ex aequo*); transcendental participation concerns analogical participations, marked by likeness to another and gradation; *attingere* participation concerns the spiritual creature “on the way of return” coming into contact with its Divine Principle through operation either *imperfectly* in this life through grace or *perfectly* in the next through glory.⁷

Since Fabro’s work on the supernatural participation of grace has been somewhat neglected, it is my hope that the exposition and partial translation of his work that follows begins to remedy the situation.

1. SUPERNATURAL PARTICIPATIONS

Cornelio Fabro’s *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquino* (1939) was originally published as a dissertation in theology (1937). While largely focused on predicamental and transcendental participation, it contains a brief section on what Fabro calls “supernatural participations” (NMP, 287–301). In the section, Fabro deals with three topics: the elevation to grace and glory;

grace and sanctification; and the participation of Christ.

a) *The Elevation to Grace and Glory* (NMP, 287–291)

Fabro begins by recalling that of all the created, *natural* participations, all of which reflect God's infinite perfection in diverse ways, the noblest participation is the positive immateriality proper to intellectual knowledge. Thanks to the assimilation proper to knowledge, the spiritual creature, although it remains a *finite* being ontologically speaking, has an *infinite* formal range. Through its proper operation, the spiritual creature can receive and assimilate the forms of all things within itself in an intentional way. In this way, rational and intellectual creatures are said to approach divine infinity.⁸ Now, every creature is imperfect to some degree because every created essence is finite and limited; yet, in some way, the cognitive act proper to spiritual creatures remedies their radical imperfection, as they can, through knowledge, possess the perfection of another.⁹

At this point, Fabro makes an important distinction: while all creatures manifest a *likeness of God*, only the rational creature is said to be *capable of God*, i.e., their nature can be elevated by God to share in divine nature.¹⁰ Second, while all creatures are ordered to God as their end, only the rational creature has an *immediate* order to God since God is the end of man's movement of return.¹¹ Thirdly, man is said to be made "in the image of God" and attains, reaches or "touches" (*atingendo*) God by his proper operations of knowledge and love.¹²

Because of this, man—as *capax Dei*, as immediately ordered to God, and as *imago Dei*—experiences

within himself a kind of mysterious, interior tension: no finite truth can satisfy his infinite capacity and his finite faculty does not rest until it enters into contact with the Infinite. "Man's perfect happiness consists not in that which perfects the intellect by some participation, but in that which is so by its essence."¹³ Hence, only the contemplation of God, whose being is his essence, makes man perfectly blessed. I note in passing that Fabro makes no reference to a natural happiness, metaphysical knowledge of God as cause of all things, that could possibly satisfy man's natural desire. Fabro continues:

Now, if everything depended on our own natural strength, our soul would have to resign itself to an eternal torment of hunger, greeting from afar with a desperate longing for the *patria* of blessed contemplation, obliged to bury within himself the flicker [*illusione*] of his infinite desires. But the divine goodness—that produced his created effusions, not through a useless waste of power but rather according to a loving plan of wisdom—wanted to graft supernatural life onto the trunk of natural life, by which man receives the capacity and the right of that infinite vision.¹⁴

God, however, does not immediately bring the created human intellect to the contemplation of his divine essence. Instead, man is gradually initiated in this vision while on earth. In other words, man does not participate in the vision of God immediately, but rather successively, according to the mode of his rational nature.¹⁵

The initial participation is faith; the ultimate participation is the vision of glory.¹⁶ Faith, Fabro notes,

makes us adhere to the beatifying object, but it does not make us completely and perfectly happy, for it is intrinsically conjoined to non-evidence and obscurity. Faith "is a principle for the soul of a restless tendency and of an inflamed desire toward clarity and full light."¹⁷ When faith is informed by charity, then the gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed to form part of the economy of salvation of the soul. Even though the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding bring about a certain contact with the supernatural, the proper and full vision will only happen after this life through the light of glory, which is the most proper participation of divine life. In this vision, the rational creature enters into communion with the very object that is God himself, the supreme participation that God can give of himself to the creature is given. In the beatific vision, the soul will reach God, not by "participating" alone, but by a true "attaining," "touching," or "contact" (*attingere*) and God will be given to the soul in his real presence and not through a created likeness.¹⁸ The glorified creature participates in the very eternity of God.¹⁹ This participation in God's eternity consists in the intransmutability of operation, which is given by possessing God. Man's will and the mind will then rest, conjoined in an irrevocable way to their divine Principle.²⁰

b) Grace and Sanctification (NMP, 291–294)

The vision of glory, prepared for by faith, requires the elevation and purification of the soul itself. At this point, we see R. Garrigou-Lagrange's influence on the young Fabro, who presented his dissertation at the Angelicum. Fabro's text reads:²¹

La visione della gloria . . .
 esige . . . l'elevazione e la
 purificazione di tutta
 l'anima in sè, come
 natura, onde venga
 fondata in potenza
 prossima la sua
 ordinazione a partecipare
 la vita stessa di Dio nella
 visione beatifica, e ne
 venga dato come il diritto.

The vision of glory . . .
 requires . . . the
 elevation and
 purification of the
 entire soul in *se*, as
 nature, so that its
 ordination to
 participate the very life
 of God in the beatific
 vision is founded as a
 proximate potency, and
 is given to it as a right.

Garrigou-Lagrange's position holds that, before the infusion of grace, the soul only has an "obediential potency" or "remote potency" to the beatific vision.²² Through grace, the soul is ordered to share in the beatific vision and is in proximate potency, actuated by the essence of grace, to that vision.²³

The Metaphysics of Grace in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange

<i>Ante infusionem gratiae</i>	The spiritual soul has an <i>obediential</i> potency to the beatific vision	The spiritual soul has a <i>remote</i> potency to the beatific vision
<i>Per gratiam infusam</i>	The spiritual soul is <i>supernaturally</i> <i>ordered</i> to the beatific vision	The justified spiritual soul has a <i>proximate</i> potency, actuated by the essence of grace, to the beatific vision

<p><i>Gloria</i></p>	<p>The spiritual soul enjoys the beatific vision</p>	<p>The glorified spiritual soul is totally actuated in the supernatural order and no longer in potency to the beatific vision</p>
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Fabro continues: the elevation and purification of the soul occurs by a new and more proper participation of God which touches the very essence of the soul and is called "sanctifying grace."²⁴ Thus, in the created order, grace is conceived of as the supreme divine participation; through it, divinity, which belongs to God in an essential way, is communicated to the creature in an accidental way. Grace, unlike all the other participations, is conceived as a formal participation of the very Deity itself. In a later article on grace, Fabro will use Piolanti's expression "real participation" instead of "formal participation."²⁵ As proof texts, Fabro offers the following texts from the *Summa theologiae*:

- 1) "There is a twofold beatitude or happiness of man, as was said above. One proportionate to human nature, to which man can arrive through the principles of his nature. The other beatitude exceeds the nature of man, to which man can only arrive by divine power, according to a *certain participation of the divinity* according to what is said in 2 Pt 1:4, that by Christ we are made partakers of the divine nature."²⁶

- 2) "And because grace is above human nature, it cannot be a substance or a substantial form, but is an accidental form of the soul itself. Now what is substantially in God, becomes accidental in the soul participating [in] the divine goodness And thus because the soul participates in the divine goodness imperfectly, the participation of the divine goodness, which is grace, has its being in the soul in a less perfect way than the soul subsists in itself. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it is the expression or participation of the divine goodness, it is nobler than the nature of the soul, though not in its mode of being."27
- 3) "The light of grace, which is a participation of the divine nature."28
- 4) "Grace is nothing other than a participated likeness of divine nature according to 2 Pt 1:4: he has given us grace and precious promises, that we may be partakers of the divine nature."29
- 5) Through sanctifying grace, the soul "becomes a participant of the divine Word and proceeding Love, so that freely it may truly know and rightly love God": in such a way that it is able "to enjoy the divine person and make use of their effect."30

Because grace is a participation it belongs to the finite and created order. It always appears like a "degradation" and a likeness with respect to the fullness that the divine nature possesses itself:

The grace which is an accident is a certain

participated likeness of the divinity in man. But by the Incarnation [Christ's] human nature is not said to have participated in some likeness of the divine nature, but is said to be united to the divine nature itself in the Person [of the Son].³¹

Together with grace, which is given "by way of nature," the super-natural virtues are infused in the soul; through these virtues, the soul can perform meritorious works for eternal life.³² Like grace, the infused theological virtues belong to man by way of participation.³³ The growth of the spiritual life by means of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, insofar as this is an assimilation of divine life, means that the soul enjoys an immediate irradiation of the divine Persons: "charity . . . is a certain participation of the infinite Charity, which is the Holy Spirit."³⁴

Through the communication of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the soul reaches, in a certain manner, the very conditions of life of the heavenly *patria*. That which is properly supernatural in the infused virtues is the substance of the habit, namely the end and object, but not yet the "mode of operation," which is still "according to the human condition,"³⁵ and according to the rule of reason enlightened by faith. Under the action of God, however, the soul acquires a divine mode of operation and measures its actions by another rule "which is the divinity participated to man in its way, by which he no longer acts humanly, but as if he was made God by participation."³⁶ The gifts, then, are the normal and necessary completion and prolongation of the infused virtues and the intensity of the spiritual life grows from the virtues and moves toward a predominance of the gifts. In this way, the gifts are the

supreme participation of the divinity that the soul achieves on earth: through the gifts, the soul is ordered to God in the most immediate way possible here on earth.³⁷

In his natural life, man's appetitive and operative powers are subject to the command of reason; in the supernatural life, through the infusion of the gifts, the inhabiting Holy Spirit becomes the principle and rule of the life of the soul. Through an assimilation of and immediate passion for divine things, the soul becomes more and more docile and sensitive to every movement of its "Sweet Guest." The gifts comprehend every aspect, both practical and speculative, of human life; and after having introduced the soul, almost experientially, into the secrets of the supernatural life on earth, according to a certain participation, these are what, fully developed in heaven, bestow upon the soul the perfect possession and full expansion of the divine rule, "when man is totally subject to God."³⁸ Aquinas's theology of the gifts is nothing more than an attempt to explain the intimate operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul, which, here below, through an immediate contact, give the soul a foretaste of the way of life that it will have in the definitive possession of God according to a full participation.³⁹

c) The Participation of Christ (NMP, 294-301)

In this section, Fabro expounds briefly seven themes connected to supernatural participations: (1) participation, original sin, and our redemption; (2) our participation in the "grace of Christ"; (3) the distribution and participation of the grace of Christ in his Mystical Body; (4) Christ's human nature as the instrumental cause of grace; (5) the Sacraments and

our participation in the grace of Christ, (6) participation and divinization, and (7) participation in heavenly glory.

1) *Participation, original sin, and our redemption* God created man in the state of grace, but Adam, the first man, did not surpass the test and fell, bringing all men into perdition—insofar as all men participate with him and by him in human nature. Aquinas uses the notion of participation to present the doctrinal truth of original sin⁴⁰ and Fabro clarifies that our participation in human nature is a *predicamental* participation. The same notion of participation will be used when Aquinas speaks about Christ, the new Adam, who repairs the damage caused by the first Adam.⁴¹

2) *Our participation in the "grace of Christ."* With the Incarnation, we see the beginning of a new plane in the divine economy of salvation while the grace that the good angels and of our first parents was participated in was directly from God as "*gratia Dei*," the grace of men and women who are regenerated is participated by means of Christ who has merited this grace for us. This grace is '*gratia Christi*,' and all the gifts that God now effuses in the souls of the just, are participations of the fullness of gifts that is in him. Christ, then, is considered as a new source of supernatural participations.⁴²

3) *The distribution and participation of the grace of Christ in his Mystical Body.* In fact, grace was given to Christ according to all its fullness. And the men of this world receive from this fullness. Christ, the author of grace (*auctor gratiae*),⁴³ distributes it to the faithful, building up his Mystical Body, the Church,

where the fullness of gifts that is in Him, the Head, is found "variedly" distributed and participated in the members. Only Christ possessed the Holy Spirit in fullness: "But Christ alone had the Holy Spirit in fullness. . . . For the other saints received of his fullness and were made participants not of his substance, but of his distributions."⁴⁴ Thus there is a "discretion" or "division," united to a degradation of the extensive and intensive grace, which is proper to Christ the Head and this is analogous to the degradation, proper to the participations of the natural order, of the fullness of the being of God. "However much the grace of some men increases, referring to the grace they possess according to some particular participation, this can never equal the grace of Christ, which is universally full."⁴⁵

All of our supernatural gifts are participated from Christ. Thus the first gift our adoptive sonship, is a participation in Christ's natural sonship. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and this is given to him by the "grace of union", we become children of God only by habitual grace, which is something created and accidental, and is, therefore, an *operatio Dei ad extra*⁴⁶

4) *Christ's human nature as the instrumental cause of grace.* Jesus Christ can restore man to friendship with God insofar as, being perfect God and perfect man, he was constituted as the perfect mediator. Christ's humanity is seen here as the instrumental cause in the work of our salvation. Every instrumental causality is a causality by participation, where the effect receives its specification of its form, not from the instrumental cause, but by the principal cause.⁴⁷ In Christ, his divine operation employs the human operation, and his human

operation participates in the power of the divine operations ⁴⁸ Furthermore the human nature assumed by the Word, in the unity of the Person, was "deified" in the participation of the glory of the divine Person.⁴⁹

5) *The Sacraments and our participation in the grace of Christ.* In this way, the humanity of Christ worked miracles and was the efficient cause of our salvation, suffering death on the Cross, this causality of the humanity of Christ is prolonged still in the application of the Redemption to the faithful which happens by means of the sacraments in a corporeal way (*corporaliter*) and by means of faith in a spiritual way (*spiritualiter*). Each sacrament has a particular way of working within us the participation in the grace of Christ and of conforming us to him. For example, through the Sacrament of Penance, one is made a participant of Christ by a real conformity to him, insofar as we suffer with the suffering Christ.⁵⁰

Christians sanctify themselves and sanctify others by participating in Christ. The priesthood and every act of worship is nothing but a visible prolongation, by participation of the priesthood of Christ, the eternal Pontiff.⁵¹ It is not enough that Christians receive sanctifying grace through which they are immediately directed to eternal life, and worship God interiorly; they must in this present life give God through Jesus Christ, exterior worship in the present Church. Christians share in the capacity to cooperate, some passively and some actively, in the exterior worship of God on earth, which has been initiated and assumed in a most perfect way by Christ. It is this capacity that is called "sacramental character," by which all Christians, and priests in

particular, are configured to the priesthood, which is called the "proper character of Christ."⁵² According to the Apostle, it is in the Sacrament of the Eucharist that the faithful reach the most intimate degree of liturgical union with Christ and with each other insofar as those who partake of the Body of the Lord are one (mystical) body.⁵³

6) *Participation and divinization.* And the entire work of sanctification of the faithful is understood by St. Thomas as a divinization, an elevation to become gods by participation.

It is clear that a person by participating in the word of God becomes god by participation. But a thing does not become this or that by participation unless it participates in what is this or that by its essence: for example, a thing does not become fire by participation unless it participates in what is fire by its essence. Therefore, one does not become god by participation unless he participates in what is God by essence. Therefore, the Word of God, that is the Son, by participation in whom we become gods, is God by essence.⁵⁴

7) *Participation in heavenly glory.* The perfect participation of Christ in the glory of heaven follows our imperfect participation of Christ here on earth. As Aquinas writes: "But it should be noted that the participation of Christ is twofold: one is imperfect through faith and the sacraments; the other is perfect through the presence and vision of the reality. The former we already have in reality; the second in hope."⁵⁵ Even the glory of the glorified bodies is also a participation in the glory of the Body of Christ.⁵⁶ Our final resurrection in the flesh is a participation

in the Resurrection of Christ, which is the efficient instrumental cause and exemplar cause. Just as the Father has given life to the Son, so Son is now the principle of every participated life 27

Fabro concludes: "From participation to participation, sweetly attracted by the merciful epiphanies of divine goodness the human creature journeys the stages of his moral purification and is prepared for the supreme epiphany, in which he will sit down at the divine banquet. And the hunger for truth and the thirst for justice, which so torment us here below, will be fully quenched by the eternal and exuberant pouring out and gushing forth of the divinity into the soul."28

2. SUPERNATURAL PARTICIPATIONS

Fabro takes up the theme of supernatural participations again in a summary section on the Thomistic notion of participation. He notes, with some reservations, a certain dissatisfaction with the Carmelites' definition and division of physical participation into formal and virtual. He opines that these theologians have considered the metaphysical problem of participation in too physical a manner, but that he reserves judgment to a later date when his research on participation is concluded 29

According to Fabro an outline of static or structural, *natural* participation, based on Aquinas's texts, would distinguish, not between formal and virtual participation, but between predicamental and transcendental participation:

- 1) *participare essentiam* (predicamental) participation according to which the same form is possessed by two things in really diverse ways

2) *participare similitudinem*—(transcendental)
participation in which what is possessed is a
deficient imitation of a property or form, both
the formal degree and the real mode are di-
verse

According to the first, the participation does not
affect the formality with regard to its essential con-
tent: both Socrates and Plato participate in humanity
according to the same formal degree (formal iden-
tity), yet there is a real substantial diversity. They are
both fully and equally human but are not the exten-
sive totality of humanity (*totam sed non totalem*)

According to the second, both the formal degree
and the real mode are diverse. Fabro gives three
examples, the way creatures participate in being, life,
and wisdom with respect to God, the way human be-
ings participate in intellectuality with respect to an-
gels, and the way brute animals participate in ratio-
nality with respect to human beings. In the first
example, not only does the *esse* of the creature not ex-
haust the extensive fullness of *esse*, but also created
esse is formally finite under the *intensive* aspect. For
example, creatures that share in and exercise the for-
malities of life (*vivere*) and wisdom, do so not im-
mediately because of their *esse*, but through powers
and added accidents rooted in their essence.¹⁰¹

Fabro writes that through the supernatural par-
ticipations, the intellectual creature is found on the
way of "return" to its Principle, and this return hap-
pens through successive steps. This return begins
with faith, which makes divine truth present to the
intellect as an object of adhesion on the part of the
intellect, but not as an object of contemplation. The
infusion of charity which brings the gifts of the
Holy Spirit, gives to the intellect and will a certain

immediate "contact" with divine things, but it is only in the *Patria* that the divinity is communicated to the creature according to the divine way in which God knows and loves himself. In the beatific vision, the entire divine essence is given, but not in its comprehensive totally (*totam, sed non totaliter*).¹

In supernatural participations, and in particular, the beatific vision, one does not merely have a "participation in a likeness" (*participare similitudinem*) as is the case in natural participations, but it is in the divinity itself, not just a likeness of the divinity, that the act of the creature terminates. It is a participation that is also an *attingere* ("touching" "attaining," or "reaching"), which could be called the third mode of participation, above univocal-predicamental participation and analogous-transcendental participation.²

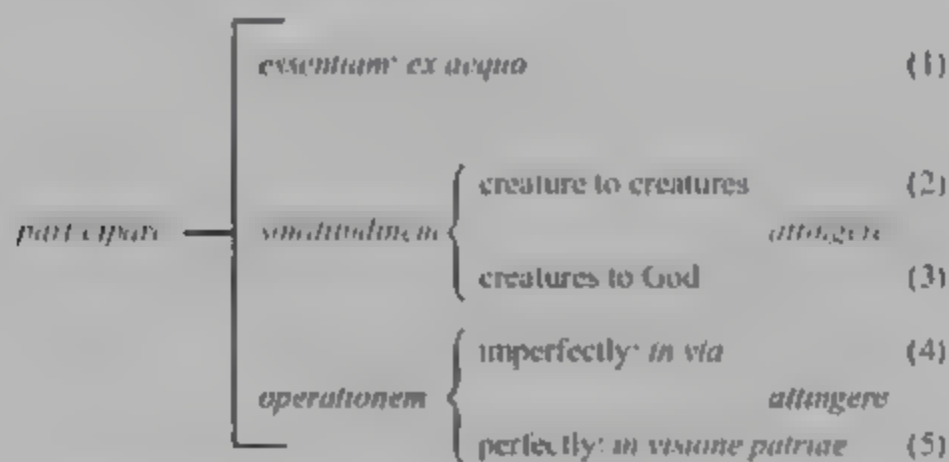
Aquinas, Fabro notes, distinguishes two modes of "*attingere*":

The lower nature may reach (*attingi*) the higher in two ways, first, according to a degree of the participating power, and thus man's ultimate perfection will consist in his attaining to a contemplation such as that of the angels. Secondly, as the object is attained by the power, and thus the final perfection of each power is to attain that in which is found the fullness of its formal object.³

In another text, Aquinas will distinguish between "attaining by likeness" and "attaining by operation." The first signals the pinnacle of natural participation, while the second indicates the summit of supernatural participations.

Beatitude is the ultimate perfection of the rational nature. For nothing is finally perfect, unless it attains (*attingat*) its principle according to its mode: therefore I say that something attains the principle, which is God, in two ways: one way by likeness, which is common to all creatures—which have as much perfection as what is consequent upon the divine likeness, the other way, by operation. . . . I say by operation, insofar as the rational creature knows and loves God. And because the soul is immediately made by God, therefore to be blessed cannot be had except in immediately seeing God, namely without a medium, which is a likeness of the known thing.⁶⁴

Fabro concludes, there are three fundamental meanings of participation: two of which reach the intensity of *attingere*:



These five instances can be expounded as follows:

- 1) In predicamental participations, there is a formal identity and a substantial diversity. Bonaventure and Aquinas both participate in "man" (species) and "animal" (genus), according to the first mode of participation, but Bonaventure and Aquinas are two

really diverse substances 25

- 2) In this transcendental participation, Fabro is referring to the metaphysical principle of contingency in which an inferior substance participates in the perfection of what is immediately superior to it. For example, rational animals participate in the intellectual nature of angels.
- 3) In this transcendental participation, according to the third mode of participation, there is an analogical community between the effect (creature) and its cause (God). Here participation entails a causal relationship of dependence, imitation, and order. According to the second mode of participation, the being that the created substance possesses is a likeness of divine being.
- 4) In this supernatural participation, the rational creature *in via* is elevated to participate in the divine nature still imperfectly. The soul comes into contact with the divine Persons and is empowered to know and love, to act in a divine manner.
- 5) In this supernatural participation, the rational creature *in Patria* rests definitely and perfectly in the divine nature, and sees the very essence of God without creaturely mediation. The very form of God is impressed upon the human intellect.

Fabro notes that the more a participation is perfect, the less it is "to participate" and more properly becomes *attingere*, in other words, the more *attingere*

grows in perfection, the more it signifies and immediate union and full communication.⁶⁰

Ultimately, *atingere Deum* on behalf of the creature is threefold: (1) the *atingere per similitudinem* common to every creature, but especially to the rational creature as *Imago Dei*; (2) the *atingere per operationem* proper to the just and especially the elect; (3) the *atingere per unitatem divinae personae* proper to the human nature of Christ.⁶¹

Fabro concludes his study in *NMP* by referring to the operation of creatures and by opening up his study to "dynamic participation," which he would undertake in *Partecipazione e causalità* (1960-1961). He distinguishes between the first constitution in being of a finite being and the successive actuation according to an ascending movement which is a return to the cause itself, the eminent source of perfection. On the one hand the creature does not have the right to existence in the sense that God is free not to create. However, regarding the problem of the operation of the finite being, a finite being must perfect itself: it has to "operate" or act in the sense of passing from potency to act, it must acquire further perfections and actualities.⁶²



Over the years, Fabro would return to *NMP* and correct certain Scholastic influences, such as the use of "existence" instead of *esse* or the use of "abstraction" instead of "resolution." I think a similar process of purification can be accomplished with regard to his thought on grace as a participation in divine nature, for example, his reliance on the Scholastic understanding of the natural desire to see God and references to grace as a "formal participation." At the same time, just as the intuitions in his early

work on participation and *actus essendi* proved fruitful for a renewal in Thomistic metaphysics. I believe that there are powerful suggestions made by Fabro regarding grace that ought to be explored, especially his proposal of a third type of participation – *attingere per operationem*. To these possible explorations I now turn.

3. AVENUES FOR RESEARCH

a) *Return and Grace*

A thorough consideration of Aquinas's texts on grace as a participation in divine nature reveals that the proper context is the order, governance, and return of rational creatures to their divine principle. Spiritual creatures are ordered to God, governed by God, and return to God through their operation in a way that differs from all other creatures. In Aquinas, the dynamic of procession and return is not simply from and to the divine nature (divinity in the abstract), but rather from the Triune God and to the Triune God.

The gift of grace is the divine help that *sufficiently* proportions and orders rational and intellectual creatures to eternal life, purifies them, constitutes them in spiritual being, elevates them to share in divine being as adopted children of God, and enables them to carry out meritorious works for salvation.

Now, by presenting grace as a *formal* participation in divine nature, Scholastic thinkers emphasized the formal assimilation to God's intellectual nature, deity (*deitas*) or divinity (*divinitas*).⁵² I would argue that Fabro's approach of grace as a *real* participation and his emphasis on *attingere per operationem*, allows for greater importance to be

given to the dynamic role of the invisible Trinitarian missions: the presence of the Son through the gift of wisdom and the presence of the Holy Spirit through the virtue of charity. Greater attention to the *reditus* context of grace will dovetail with Aquinas's metaphysics of operation, his theory of divine motion in creatures, the notion of participated power in creatures, and open up to a deeper understanding of the *operari gratiae*.

Important advances have been made by Alain Contat regarding operative participation and final causality. In my view, Cornelio Fabro has the merit of considering transcendental participation in connection with efficient causality and has provided some initial insight into exemplar and final causality. Gregory Doolan explored more fully the relationship between participation and exemplar causality in Chapter Six of his *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (2008). Alain Contat has recently developed along Fabrian lines, the relationship between participation, final causality, and operation.²⁹ The last point is important because the metaphysical context of the bestowal of grace is the return of the rational creature to God.

b) The Metaphysics of Being and the Theology of Grace

Another avenue for research concerns the relationship between the metaphysics of being and the theology of grace. It remains to be seen whether the "formal turn" that Fabro sees in the historical development of Scholastic metaphysics has also influenced the theology of grace. As an alternative to Garrigou-La-grange's proposal based on an obediential potency to the beatific vision, I offer the following chart as a possible avenue for research.

Possible Development

		The spiritual soul has a <i>natural</i> <i>passive</i> potency, with no corresponding connatural active potency, to the beatific vision
Ante infusionem gratiae	The spiritual soul is naturally ordered to the beatific vision	
Per gratum infusum	The spiritual soul is sufficiently proportioned or ordered to the beatific vision	The justified spiritual soul has the <i>esse in actu</i> of grace the beginning of the beatific vision
Gloria	The spiritual soul enjoys the beatific vision	In the glorified spiritual soul, consummated grace fully unfolds all of its intrinsic virtualities

I believe this proposal will (1) give more importance to the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) understood as an "*esse in actu*" rather than the essence of grace, (2) highlight the perfecting of rational nature—which is naturally ordered to the beatific vision—by grace which *sufficiently* orders and proportions human nature to the beatific vision,⁷² rather than change its end,⁷³ and (3) expounds the relation of grace to glory, not in terms of proximate potency to the vision (grace) and actualization of the vision (glory), but rather in terms of imperfect act and participation (grace as the beginning of glory)⁷⁴ and perfect act and participation (glory as the

c) *Grace and the Three Modes of Participation*

Another question or avenue for research concerns Fabro's approach to participation and whether it can better integrate Aquinas's three modes of participation (particular-universal, subject-act; effect-cause) with regard to grace. Could Aquinas's texts be interpreted in such a way that Christ's habitual grace as source and cause of sanctifying grace is according to the third mode of participation, sanctifying grace as the form possessed by the creature is according to the second mode of participation and a universal consideration of grace as possessed by justified Christians in according to the first mode of participation?

Aquinas's distinction of three modes of participation is found in his *Commentary on Boethius's De Hebdomadibus*, lectio 2. I have suggested elsewhere that the question of which participation belongs to *esse* can be resolved by correlating each mode to the distinction between *esse commune*, *actus essendi*, and *Esse subsistens*.⁷⁶ As well the first mode is founded on the second and the second is founded on the third. The possession of *esse* by a creature (second mode) can be considered universally (first mode) or in relation to its cause (third mode). According to the first mode, *esse* is *esse commune*; according to the second mode, *esse* is *actus essendi*; according to the third mode, *esse* is a likeness of *Esse divinum*.

I would propose that something similar happens when we consider grace as a participation of divine nature.

1) According to the first mode, grace is

considered universally and abstractly by the mind in relation to particulars. For example, we can consider the grace that all justified Christians possess.

2) According to the second mode of participation, grace is considered as a qualitative act in a subject something the justified soul possesses and is perfected by. On the one hand, the accident is said to inhere in the subject and does not have its own act of being apart from the being of the substance; on the other, the accident perfects the subject making it a participant of divine nature constituting it in divine, spiritual *esse*.

3) According to the third mode of participation, grace is considered as an effect in the justified rational creature in relation to its efficient cause (dependence), as a likeness of its cause (imitation), and as ordered to its cause. The threefold *ratio* of causality applies. According to the first, God is seen as the principal efficient cause of grace and Christ's human nature as the instrumental, efficient cause of grace. According to the second, the effect of grace is seen as a participated likeness of the divine nature or divine *esse*. Christ is the causal exemplar of our deification. According to the third (final causality), the grace of God in the creature is seen as the beginning of glory and as ordered to glory, which is consummated grace.

Rather than reduce grace to a formal participation in God's intellectual nature or *deitas*, Fabro's

thought on participation allows us to explore all the richness that a third type of participation – called *attingere per operationem* – may contain

Fabro's theory of participation, as we have seen, not only employs univocal, natural, predicamental participations (individual-species, species-genus, subject-natural accident, matter-form) and analogical natural, transcendental participations (finite *ens-actus essendi*, creature-similitudo *esse divinae*), but opens up to supernatural *attingere* participations (justified creature-*esse gratiae* beatified creature-*esse gloriae*).

d) Relationship between the Being of Nature and the Being of Grace

When dealing with grace, Aquinas distinguishes a twofold being (*esse*): the *esse naturale* proper to nature (*esse naturae*) and the *esse spirituale* proper to grace (*esse gratiae*). Some of Aquinas's texts include

- 1) "Creation and re-creation are entirely similar. In fact, as God, by creation, has conferred to things the *esse* of nature, and that *esse* is formally from the form received in the created reality itself, which is like the terminus of the operation of the agent itself, and still that form is the principle of the natural operations that God works in things – so also in re-creation God confers to the soul the *esse* of grace, and the formal principle of that being is the created habit, by means of which one works as well the meritorious work that God works in us."77

- 2) "By creation, God produces natural *esse* in us without any mediating agent cause, but by

means of some formal cause: for the natural form is the principle of natural *esse*. Likewise God produces in us gratuitous spiritual *esse* without any mediating agent, but by some created form, which is grace."⁷⁸

3) "For creation is a motion from nothing to *esse*. But there are two kinds of *esse*, namely, the *esse* of nature and the *esse* of grace. The first creation was made when creatures were produced by God from nothing to the *esse* of nature, and then the creature was new but became old by sin. 'He has made my flesh and my skin waste away' (Lam 3 4). Therefore, a new creation was required by which we would be produced in the *esse* of grace, which also is a creation from nothing since those who lack grace are nothing. 'And if I understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing' (1 Cor 13 2). 'In his tent, i.e., of sin, dwells that which is none of his' (Job 18 15). Augustine says 'For sin is nothing and men become nothing when they sin.' So, it is clear that the infusion of grace is a creation."⁷⁹

4) "God creates natural *esse* without an efficient medium, but not without a formal medium. For, to each thing he gave the form through which it is. And likewise he gives the *esse* of grace through some superadded form. But they are not entirely similar; for, as Augustine says in *Super Ioan*, 'He who created you without you will not justify you without you.' Therefore in justification, some operation of

justifying is required; and thus it is required that there be an active formal principle which **does not occur in creation.**⁸⁰

Both the soul and grace exercise a formal causality, the first with respect to *esse naturae*, the second with respect to *esse gratiae*. In synthesis,

- 1) natural *esse* is given to us through creation through the mediation of a formal cause (created substantial form);
- 2) spiritual *esse* is given to us through re-creation through the mediation of a formal cause (grace).

Here, we will need to inquire more deeply into the relationship between the two types of *esse*. The formalistic school tends to posit that every form, substantial and accidental, has its own act of being. In this case, grace would confer its own *actus essendi* (existence), which is super-added to the being of the creature. The perfecting of human nature by grace would occur primarily by way of formal, extrinsic addition.

For his part, Fabro distinguishes between the act of being of the substance, *esse ut actus*, and the being of the accidents, *esse in actu*. Seen in relation to grace, the spiritual being mediated by the created form of grace is not another *actus essendi*, but rather would be an *esse spirituale in actu* that ontologically changes and intensifies the *esse naturale in actu*. The perfection of human nature by grace occurs by way of intensification.⁸¹ In this elevation by way of intensification, the *actus essendi* of the creature is not modified and remains *fixum et quietum*; the creature's *esse in actu*, however, is perfected and, by

means of grace, created human persons are re-created and constituted in divine being as adopted sons and daughters of God.



In conclusion, just as Fabro's metaphysical interpretation of Aquinas counterbalances certain tendencies in formalistic or essentialistic interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics, so also, it seems, Fabro's theory of supernatural participation counterbalances certain tendencies in the formalistic interpretation of Aquinas's theology of grace. I offer the following summary chart that exemplifies where further research might take us.

Formalistic interpretation of grace	Interpretation of grace developed along Fabrian lines
Grace is a formal participation and formal assimilation to God's divine nature or <i>deitas</i> .	Grace is a real supernatural participation in divine nature by which the rational creature, on the way of return, "touches" (<i>attingit</i>) God imperfectly <i>per operationem</i> .
Grace supernaturally orders the rational creature to the beatific vision.	The rational creature, by nature, is naturally ordered to the beatific vision and, by grace, sufficiently ordered and proportioned to the beatific vision.
Grace is a formal	Grace is a real

participation
(participation by
similitude).

The accidental form of
grace communicates its
own *esse* or act of being
to the rational creature
by way of addition

participation in divine
nature that mediates
spiritual *esse* and
constitutes the rational
creature in divine *esse*.

The accidental form of
grace communicates *esse*
spirituale in actu to the
rational creature by way
of addition, yet also
intensifies and perfects
its *esse naturale in actu*,
while its *actus essendi*
remains *fixum et*
quietum.

¹ NMP; C. Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo Tommaso d'Aquino*, Opere Complete 19 (Segni: EDIVI, 2010). See also *Selected Articles on Metaphysics and Participation*, Selected Works of Cornelio Fabro, vol. 1 (Chillum, MD: IVE Press, 2016), J. Mitchell, *Being and Participation: The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro*, 2 vols. (Rome: Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, 2012). All translations of Fabro's text in Italian and Aquinas's text in Latin are my own.

² L.-B. Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1942). See H. John, *The Thomist Spectrum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 108–122.

³ ST I-II, q. 112, a. 1: “Donum autem gratiae excedit omnem facultatem naturae creatae, cum nihil aliud sit quam quaedam participatio divinae naturae, quae excedit omnem aliam naturam.”

⁴ *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3: “quod esse naturale per

creationem Deus facit in nobis nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali: forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis. Et similiter esse spirituale gratuitum Deus facit in nobis nullo agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua forma creata, quae est gratia.”

2 Cf. Melissa Eitenmiller, “Grace as Participation according to St. Thomas Aquinas,” *New Blackfriars* (2016).

3 R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa theologiae of St. Thomas*, 1^a 11^{ae} q. 109–114 (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 128. “[S]anctifying grace is a participation in the divine nature, not only moral but physical, not only virtual but formal, analogical however, imperfectly imitating as an accident what, in God, is substance.”

4 See NMP, 314.

5 See NMP, 287. See also *In II Sent.*, d. 16, q. 1, a. 2. “Consideratis autem divinae bonitatis processibus in creaturis, quibus naturae creatae constituuntur in similitudinem naturae increatae, ultima invenitur intellectualis dignitatis participatio et quae omnes alias praesupponat, et ideo intellectualis natura attingit ad imitationem divinam, in qua quodammodo consistit species naturae eius, et inde est quod in eadem operatione ponimus ultimam felicitatem intellectualis creaturae, in qua est felicitas Dei, scilicet in contemplatione intellectiva, et ideo sola intellectualis creatura rationabiliter ad imaginem Dei dicitur esse.”

6 See NMP, 287. See also *De ver.*, q. 2, a. 2: “Unde ut huic imperfectioni aliquod remedium esset, invenitur alius modus perfectionis in rebus creatis, secundum quod perfectio quae est propria unius rei, in altera re invenitur; et haec est perfectio cognoscentis

in quantum est cognoscens, quia secundum hoc a cognoscente aliquid cognoscitur quod ipsum cognitum est aliquo modo apud cognoscentem; et ideo in III de anima dicitur, anima esse quodammodo omnia, quia nata est omnia cognoscere. Et secundum hunc modum possibile est ut in una re totius universi perfectio existat."

¹⁰ See NMP, 288. See also *De ver.*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 5: "Only the rational creature is *capax Dei*, since he alone can know and love him explicitly, but other creatures participate in the divine likeness."

¹¹ See NMP, 288, ST II-II, q. 2, a. 3: "Only the rational creature has an immediate order to God . . . ; insofar as he knows the universal ratio of good and being, he has an immediate order to the universal principle of being."

¹² ST III, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2.

¹³ ST I-II, q. 3, a. 7.

¹⁴ NMP, 289.

¹⁵ ST II-II, q. 2, a. 3.

¹⁶ NMP, 289. *Comm. In Ev. Io.*, ch. 1, lect. 4, no. 120: "there is a twofold participation of divine light: one perfect, which is glory, . . . one imperfect, which is had by faith."

¹⁷ See NMP, 289. "La Fede . . . è principio per l'anima di un'irrequieta tendenza e di un acceso desiderio verso la chiarezza e la luce piena." See *De ver.*, q. 14, a. 1, ad 5: "fides habet aliquid perfectionis, et aliquid imperfectionis. Perfectionis quidem est ipsa firmitas, quae pertinet ad assensum; sed imperfectionis est carentia visionis, ex qua remanet adhuc motus cogitationis in mente credentis. Ex lumine igitur simplici, quod est fides, causatur id quod perfectionis est, scilicet assentire; sed in quantum illud lumen non perfecte participatur, non totaliter tollitur

imperfectio intellectus, et sic motus cogitationis in ipso remanet inquietus.”

¹⁸ NMP, 290. See *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 2: “Cum ergo ultimus finis quasi exterior humanae voluntatis sit Deus, non potest esse quod aliquis actus voluntatis sit interior finis; sed ille actus erit ultimus finis interior quo primo hoc modo se habebit ad Deum, ut voluntas quietetur in ipso. Haec autem est visio Dei secundum intellectum, quia per hanc fit quasi quidam contactus Dei ad intellectum, cum omne cognitum sit in cognoscente secundum quod cognoscitur”

¹⁹ See SCG III, ch. 61.

²⁰ See NMP, 291.

²¹ NMP, 291.

²² R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality. A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought* (Ex Fontibus Co., 2015), 312. “The obediential potency, by which the creature is capable of elevation to the supernatural order, is passive, not active. Were it otherwise, this potency would be both essentially natural—as a property of nature, and simultaneously supernatural—as specifically constituted by a supernatural object, to which it would be essentially proportioned. The word ‘obediential’ relates this potency to the agent which alone can raise it to a supernatural object, to which—without that elevation—it can never be related and proportioned. Here lies the distinction between the two orders.”

²³ In particular, for Garrigou-Lagrange, sufficient grace is that which gives the proximate potency or power to the perfect act of justification. See R. Garrigou-La-grange, *Grace*, 231: “Hence sufficient grace gives a certain power, as proximate as you please, for good work, but it does not give the very act itself, this latter requires infallibly efficacious grace.”

²⁴ NMP, 291.

²⁵ See Fabro, "S. Tommaso e la partecipazione di Maria alla grazia di Cristo," in *Momenti dello spirito*, vol. II (1983).

²⁶ ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1: "Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas, ut supra dictum est. Una quidem proportionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest, secundum quandam divinitatis participationem, secundum quod dicitur II Petr. 1, quod per Christum facti sumus consortes divinae naturae."

²⁷ ST I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2: "Et quia gratia est supra naturam humanam, non potest esse quod sit substantia aut forma substantialis, sed est forma accidentalis ipsius animae. Id enim quod substantialiter est in Deo, accidentaliter fit in anima participante divinam bonitatem, ut de scientia patet. Secundum hoc ergo, quia anima imperfecte participat divinam bonitatem, ipsa participatio divinae bonitatis quae est gratia, imperfectioni modo habet esse in anima quam anima in seipsa subsistat. Est tamen nobilior quam natura animae, inquantum est expressio vel participatio divinae bonitatis, non autem quantum ad modum essendi."

English trans., with slight modification, from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948), 1133.

²⁸ ST I-II, q. 110, a. 3: "lumen gratiae, quod est participatio divinae naturae."

²⁹ ST III, q. 62, a. 1: "gratia nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo divinae naturae,

secundum illud II Petr. I, magna nobis et pretiosa promissa donavit, ut divinae simus consortes naturae."

³⁰ ST I, q. 38, a. 1: "Aliae autem creaturae moveri quidem possunt a divina persona: non tamen sic quod in potestate earum sit frui divina persona et in effectu eius. Ad quod quandoque pertingit rationalis creatura: ut puta cum sic fit particeps divini verbi et procedentis amoris, ut possit libere Deum vere cognoscere et recte amare." *NMP* 292 cites I q. 37, a. 1.

³¹ ST III, q. 2, a. 10, ad 1. See *NMP*, 292-293. See also *Compendium theologiae*, pt. 1, ch. 215. Fabro refers to R. Garrigou-Lagrange's article "La grâce est-elle une participation de la Dité telle qu'elle est en soi?" *Revue thomiste* n.s. 19 (1936) 470-485.

³² ST I-II, q. 110, a. 3: "Virtutes autem infusae disponunt hominem altiori modo, et ad altiorem finem, unde etiam oportet quod in ordine ad aliquam altiorem naturam. Hoc autem est in ordine ad naturam divinam participatam, secundum quod dicitur II Petr. I, maxima et pretiosa nobis promissa donavit, ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae. Et secundum acceptionem huius naturae, dicimur regenerari in filios Dei. . . Sicut enim virtutes acquisitae perficiunt hominem ad ambulandum congruenter lumini naturali rationis; ita virtutes infusae perficiunt hominem ad ambulandum congruenter lumini gratiae."

³³ ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 1: "Alio modo, participative, sicut lignum ignitum participat naturam ignis, et sic quodammodo fit homo particeps divinae naturae, ut dictum est. Et sic istae virtutes conveniunt homini secundum naturam participatam."

³⁴ ST II-II, q. 24, a. 7: "Ipsa enim caritas . . . est

enim participatio quaedam infinitae caritatis, quae est Spiritus Sanctus.”

³⁵ *In III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2: “ratio domi non salvatur in virtutibus etiam infusis, quantum ad omnia, secundum quod salvatur in domis praedictis: quia modus operandi qui est in virtutibus, est secundum conditionem humanam, quamvis substantia habitus sit ex divino munere, et ita aliquo modo potest dici virtus donum.”

³⁶ *In III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3: “unde modus actionis sumitur ex eo quod est mensura et regula actionis; et ideo cum dona sint ad operandum supra humanum modum, oportet quod donorum operationes mensurentur ex altera regula quam sit regula humanae virtutis, quae est ipsa divinitas ab homine participata suo modo, ut iam non humanitas, sed quasi Deus factus participatione, operetur.”

³⁷ *In III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 1: “donum immediatius ordinat ad Deum quantum ad modum operandi, sive mensuram operis, quam virtus, non autem quantum ad objectum vel finem.”

³⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 68, a. 6.

³⁹ See *NMP*, 294.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium theologiae*, pt. I, ch. 196: “Sicut enim in una persona multa sunt membra, ita in una humana natura multae sunt personae, ut participatione speciei multi homines intelligantur quasi unus homo ut Porphyrius dicit. . . . Per hunc igitur modum defectus originalis iustitiae est peccatum naturae, . . . et sic transit in omnes qui ab ipso naturam humanam accipiunt, quasi in quaedam membra ipsius, et propter hoc dicitur originale peccatum, quia per originem a primo parente in posteros derivatur.”

⁴¹ *In III Sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 6, qc. 1: “Et quia omnes

homines sunt unus homo in natura communi, ut dicit Porphyrius. inde est quod meritum Christi, quod ad naturam se extendebat, etiam ad singulos se extendere poterat; et ita aliis mereri potuit."

⁴² See *NMP*, 295.

⁴³ See *ST* III, q. 7, a. 9, ad 1.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, ch. 6, lect. 1, no. 289, "Solum autem Christus spiritum sanctum habuit ad plenitudinem. . . . Alii enim sancti de eius plenitudine receperunt, et participes facti sunt, non quidem substantiae, sed distributionum eius."

⁴⁵ See *De ver.*, q. 29, a. 3, ad 5, "quantumcumque crescat gratia alicuius hominis qui gratiam secundum aliquam particularem participationem possidet, nunquam potest adaequare gratiam Christi, quae universaliter plena existit."

⁴⁶ See *ST* III, q. 24, a. 3, III, q. 23, a. 4, and ad 2.

⁴⁷ *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1, "Sic igitur in Christo humana natura habet propriam formam et virtutem per quam operatur et similiter divina. Unde et humana natura habet propriam operationem distinctam ab operatione divina, et e converso. Et tamen divina natura utitur operatione naturae humanae sicut operatione sui instrumenti, et similiter humana natura participat operationem divinae naturae, sicut instrumentum participat operationem principalis agentis."

⁴⁸ *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 1, "Dionysius ponit in Christo operationem theandricam, id est divinam virilem, vel divinam humanam, non per aliquam confusionem operationum seu virtutum utriusque naturae, sed per hoc quod divina operatio eius utitur humana eius operatione, et humana operatio participat virtutem divinae operationis."

⁴⁹ *Comm. In Ev. Io.*, ch. 13, lect. 6, no. 1829: "et sic humanitas Christi clarificatur a gloria divinitatis eius et humanitas Christi inducitur in gloriam divinitatis, non per transmutationem naturae, sed per participationem gloriae, inquantum ipse Christus homo adoratur tanquam Deus."

⁵⁰ *NMP*, 298. *In III Sent.*, d. 19, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2: "Secundo aliquis fit particeps Christi per realem conformitatem ad ipsum, scilicet inquantum Christo patiente patimur, quod quidem fit per poenitentiam."

⁵¹ *SCG IV*, ch. 74.

⁵² *NMP*, 299.

⁵³ *ST III*, q. 63, a. 3: "Et ideo manifestum est quod character sacramentalis specialiter est character Christi, cuius sacerdotio configurantur fideles secundum sacramentales characteres, qui nihil aliud sunt quam quaedam participationes sacerdotii Christi, ab ipso Christo derivatae."

⁵⁴ *Comm. In Ev. Io.*, ch. 10, lect. 6, no. 1460. English trans. from Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 6–12*, trans. F. Larcher and J. Weisheipl (CLA Press, 2010) 215.

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, ch. 3, lect. 3, no. 189: "Sciendum autem quod duplex est participatio Christi. Una imperfecta, quae est per fidem et sacramenta, alia vero perfecta, quae est per praesentiam et visionem rei, primam iam habemus in re, sed secundam in spe."

⁵⁶ *ST III*, q. 56, a. 2, ad 1: "Augustinus dicit resurrectionem animarum fieri per Dei substantiam, quantum ad participationem, quia scilicet participando divinam bonitatem animae fiunt iustae et bonae, non autem participando quamcumque creaturam. Unde, cum dixisset, animae resurgunt per substantiam Dei, subdit, participatione enim Dei fit anima

beata, non participatione animae sanctae. Sed participando gloriam corporis Christi, efficientur corpora nostra gloriosa."

⁵⁷ See *Comm. In Ev. Io.*, ch. 5, lect. 5, no. 782.

⁵⁸ See *NMP*, 301.

⁵⁹ *NMP*, 310–312. This point will be taken up and explored by M. Sanchez Sorondo in his doctoral dissertation (directed by Fabro).

⁶⁰ See *NMP*, 312.

⁶¹ *In IV Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 3. Cf. *NMP*, 312–313.

⁶² See *NMP*, 313.

⁶³ *ST I-II*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 3: "Attingi superiorem naturam ab inferiori contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, secundum gradum potentiae participantis, et sic ultima perfectio hominis erit in hoc quod homo attinget ad contemplandum sicut Angeli contemplantur. Alio modo, sicut obiectum attingitur a potentia, et hoc modo ultima perfectio cuiuslibet potentiae est ut attingat ad id in quo plene invenitur ratio sui obiecti."

English trans., with slight modification, from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1948), 601.

⁶⁴ *Quodlibet X*, q. 8, a. 1: "Beatitudo enim est ultima perfectio rationalis naturae. Nihil autem est finaliter perfectum, nisi attingat ad suum principium secundum modum suum. Quod ideo dico, quia ad principium, quod est Deus, attingit aliquid dupliciter. Uno modo per similitudinem, quod est commune omni creaturae; quae tantum habet de perfectione, quantum consequitur de divina similitudine. Alio modo per operationem: . . . Dico autem per operationem, in quantum rationalis creatura cognoscit et amat Deum. Et quia anima immediate facta est a

Deo, ideo beata esse non poterit nisi immediate videat Deum, scilicet absque medio quod sit similitudo rei cognitae."

⁶⁵ For the participation of species in a genus, see Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, q. 2, a. 9, ad 16: "omnia animalia sunt aequaliter animalia, non tamen sunt aequalia animalia, sed unum animal est altero maius et perfectius". For the participation of subsistent individuals in a species, see Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia super librum De caelo et mundo*, lib. I, lect. 19, no. 14: "Singula autem individua rerum naturalium quae sunt hic, sunt imperfecta; quia nullum eorum comprehendit in se totum quod pertinet ad suam speciem."

⁶⁶ See NMP, 314.

⁶⁷ NMP, 315.

⁶⁸ See NMP, 319.

⁶⁹ See M. Sánchez Sorondo, *La gracia como participación de la naturaleza divina según Santo Tomás de Aquino* (Buenos Aires-Letrán-Salamanca: Universidades Pontificias, 1979), 23–89.

⁷⁰ A. Contat, "Esse, essentia, ordo. Verso una metafisica della partecipazione operativa," *Espíritu* 61, no. 143 (2012): 9–71.

⁷¹ See Thomas Aquinas, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 5: "Quamvis enim homo naturaliter inclinetur in finem ultimum, non tamen potest naturaliter illum consequi, sed solum per gratiam, et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis."

⁷² See *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 5: "gratia dicitur secundum quod per eam homo ordinatur in vitam aeternam sufficienter. dicitur enim gratus quasi acceptatus a Deo ut habeat vitam aeternam."

⁷³ See D. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (CUA Press, 1997).

⁷⁴ ST II-II, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2: "gratia nihil est aliud quam quaedam inchoatio gloriae in nobis."

⁷⁵ *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 2, ad 7: "gratia est in prima specie qualitatis, quamvis non proprie possit dici habitus, quia non immediate ordinatur ad actum, sed ad quoddam esse spirituale quod in anima facit, et est sicut dispositio quae est respectu gloriae, quae est gratia consummata."

⁷⁶ See Mitchell, *Being and Participation*, 820.

⁷⁷ *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3: "omnino simile est de creatione et recreatione. Sicut enim Deus per creationem contulit rebus esse naturae, et illud esse est formaliter a forma recepta in ipsa re creata, quae est quasi terminus operationis ipsius agentis; et iterum forma illa est principium operationum naturalium, quas Deus in rebus operatur: ita etiam et in recreatione Deus confert animae esse gratiae; et principium formale illius esse est habitus creatus, quo etiam perficitur operatio meritoria quam Deus in nobis operatur; et ita iste habitus creatus partim se habet ad operationem spiritus sancti ut terminus, et partim ut medium."

⁷⁸ *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3: "esse naturale per creationem Deus facit in nobis nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali: forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis. Et similiter esse spirituale gratuitum Deus facit in nobis nullo agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua forma creata, quae est gratia."

⁷⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *In II Cor.*, ch. 5, lect. 4, no. 192: "Ubi notandum quod innovatio per gratiam dicitur creatura. Creatio enim est motus ex nihilo ad esse. Est autem duplex esse, scilicet esse naturae et esse gratiae. Prima creatio facta fuit quando creaturae ex nihilo productae sunt a Deo in esse naturae, et tunc

creatura erat nova, sed tamen per peccatum inveterata est. Thren. III, 4: 'vetustam fecit pellem meam,' et cetera. Oportuit ergo esse novam creationem, per quam producerentur in esse gratiae, quae quidem creatio est ex nihilo, quia qui gratia carent, nihil sunt. I Cor. XIII, v. 2: 'si noverim mysteria omnia,' etc., 'charitatem autem non habeam,' et cetera. Job XVIII, v. 15: 'habitent in tabernaculo illius socii eius, qui non est,' id est peccati. Augustinus dicit: 'peccatum enim nihil est, et nihili fiunt homines cum peccant.' Et sic patet, quod infusio gratiae est quaedam creatio."

English trans., with slight modification, from Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. J. Mortensen, et al. (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012), 482.

⁸⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *De Caritate*, a. 1, ad 13: "Deus esse naturale creavit sine medio efficiente, non tamen sine medio formali. Nam unicuique dedit formam per quam esset. Et similiter dat esse gratiae per aliquam formam superadditam. Et tamen non est omnino simile; quia, ut dicit Augustinus super Ioan., 'qui creavit te sine te, non iustificabit te sine te.' In iustificatione ergo requiritur aliqua operatio iustificantis; et ideo requiritur quod sit ibi principium activum formale: quod non habet locum in creatione."

⁸¹ For Aquinas's contrast between addition and a "greater and greater participation" in reference to the theological virtue of charity, see ST II-II, q. 24, a. 5: "Relinquitur ergo quod nullo modo caritas augeri potest per additionem caritatis ad caritatem, sicut quidam ponunt. Sic ergo caritas augetur solum per hoc quod subiectum magis ac magis participat caritatem, idest secundum quod magis reducitur in